

# North Cascades Resource Brief

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

North Cascades  
National Park Complex



TOP: Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*)

BOTTOM: Ross Lake and Hozomeen peak

## Wolves

Wolves are highly social animals with large home ranges. Key components of their habitat include a year-round prey base and sufficient space with minimal human disturbance. Because wolves need large, undisturbed areas they symbolize wildness and wild lands like North Cascades National Park Complex. Wolves are an integral part of healthy ecosystems. They keep prey populations healthy and fit by preying on the young and old, sick and injured, and weak or unfit. These large carnivores help maintain biodiversity by preventing large herbivores, deer and elk, from becoming over populated and degrading or eliminating habitat.

Wolves are also important for more than just their ecological values. For many people wolves represent strong cultural and aesthetic values. These values invoke people's desire to visit wild places.

By the 1930s wolves were thought to be extirpated from Washington State. In 1973, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the gray wolf as an "endangered species." The State of Washington listed wolves as "endangered" in 1980. Federal and state governments, as well as non-governmental groups are now working to recover wolf populations in the state.

### Trends

Reliable reports of wolves in Washington have increased since 2005. Currently, five packs are known to inhabit areas in and east of the Cascade Mountains in eastern Washington. No wolf packs have been documented occurring in western Washington.

Over the past decade, increasing anecdotal observations document wolves using areas within North Cascades National Park Complex. During the past two winters, National Park Service biologists, with help from other agencies (Seattle City Light and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) and non-government organizations, documented wolves using areas along the eastern shoreline of Ross Lake and near Hozomeen Lake. While more than one animal

is believed to be visiting these areas, it is unknown whether these observations represent the presence of a resident, breeding pack or just a few animals occasionally wondering into the park.

### Discussion

Wolves occurring in northern Washington probably represent animals that have naturally dispersed from areas of northern Idaho, northwestern Montana, or British Columbia. The eventual re-establishment of a breeding population in Washington is expected as a result of these increased dispersals. Keys to wolf recovery include maintaining an adequate prey base and reducing mortality caused by human activities.

Currently, park and state biologists are trying to capture and place satellite collars on one to three wolves to answer questions like, are these animals residents or visitors? Are they part of a resident wolf pack? Are they reproducing? Biologists also hope to learn about the diet and predation patterns of these wolves. This information will provide additional knowledge of wolf ecology in the North Cascades and help managers measure progress toward meeting Washington State wolf recovery goals.